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A SERIES ON SPIRITUAL LIFE The Struggle Against the World

Another enemy that can greatly lead us away from the way of the Lord is the world. If the world is not permeated by the Christian spirit; that is, if it has not been transformed and leavened by the "yeast of the Gospel" (Mt 13:33), then its direction is hostile to God and, consequently, will be a threat to our spiritual life. The difficult thing about this enemy is that we perceive very little of his constant influence. On the other hand, the attacks of the devil or the temptations that come from our flesh are more easily identifiable.

Let us take as for example the subject of academic training. There is no doubt that this is a great good, which should be encouraged. However, if even in the Christian environment we begin to value people according to their level of education, we will have adopted a worldly mentality. These erroneous criteria can even find their way into religious orders, even if we should know that they do not correspond to our faith. For example, a predication can be measured in terms of theological and intellectual content, and not according to how it reaches the hearts of people by the power of the Holy Spirit and moves them to conversion.

We could cite many examples that would highlight this issue... But the matter becomes particularly difficult when in our Church there seem to be more and more Christians who have not overcome their worldly mentality and even want to foster it. What a disastrous error, directly opposed to the indications given to us by Sacred Scripture! Such thinking is but an indication that one has already succumbed to the temptation of the world.

How different the words of St. Paul sound when he says: *"Do not model your behaviour on the contemporary world, but let the renewing of your minds transform you, so that you may discern for yourselves what is the will of God - what is good and acceptable and mature"* (Rom 12:2)!

For this, our thinking and acting need the illumination of the Holy Spirit, who can transform them. How can we get rid of a worldly way of thinking and acting if we do not learn to look at the world from God's perspective? This does not mean that we have to turn away from the world completely, but rather to overcome it in Christ (cf. Jn 16:33). But this will only be possible when we no longer have the world's expectations for ourselves and when we no longer adopt the world's hierarchy of values without applying any discernment of the spirits.

Yes, it is a challenge to live in the world without adopting its customs and mentality. Should we then isolate ourselves, as the people of Israel did in their time, to prevent our life with God from being affected?

This is certainly not the call that the Lord addresses to us in the New Testament. However, the history of the people of Israel leaves us a great lesson. It was precisely by mixing with other peoples that confusion arose and where so often the Israelites went astray. In the eagerness to be equal to other peoples, infidelity and contamination arose as a consequence. If the children of Israel did not rely totally on the Lord, they could no longer correspond to their special vocation of being the People of God.

We Christians cannot move naively and self-assuredly in this world, as if there were no danger in it for our walk with the Lord. The more we adopt the world's way of thinking and acting, neglecting our spiritual life, the greater the risk of relativizing those positions that go against the current and contradict the predominant mentality of the world... This is particularly true with regard to morals.

Only with a renewed way of thinking and acting in Christ will we be able to maintain the necessary distance from the world, and only in this way will we be able to permeate this world, instead of allowing ourselves to be permeated by it.